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Chairman: Mr. Galuška ..... (Czech Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 109: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/54/3, A/54/38/Rev.1 (Suppl.), A/54/98, A/54/123-E/1999/66, A/54/124, A/54/156-E/1999/102, A/54/156/Add.1-E/1999/102/Add.1, A/54/224, A/54/225, A/54/341, A/54/342, A/54/352, A/54/405)

Agenda Item 110: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (*continued*) (A/54/124, A/54/264, A/54/354)

1. **Mr. Kazykhanov** (Kazakhstan) said that his delegation believed that the system-wide plan for the advancement of women for the period 2002-2005 would make a significant contribution to the advancement of women worldwide. It attached great importance to the activities of the Division for the Advancement of Women and welcomed the decision of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to allocate financial resources for the Division's operational activities. It commended the Office of Human Resources Management upon its decision to identify future recruitment goals in terms of geography and gender and believed that the Office should take concrete action to seek out female candidates from unrepresented and under-represented countries.

2. His Government was developing effective mechanisms to increase women's integration in social and political life and expand their representation in leadership posts. With the participation of non-governmental organizations, it had elaborated a national action plan for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. It had prepared a comprehensive report on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women which had been submitted to the Division for the Advancement of Women.

3. Globalization had exacerbated economic and social disparities and caused particularly severe problems for women. Maternal health was not improving, and the maternal mortality rate was growing steadily. The situation was especially acute in the severely degraded areas of the former nuclear test site of Semipalatinsk and the Aral Sea, where there was an increase in the number of women suffering from anaemia as well as respiratory and diarrhoeal infections.

4. The international conference on the rehabilitation of the Semipalatinsk region, held in Tokyo in September 1999, had been of great importance for Kazakhstan in broadening cooperation with partner organizations for the benefit of the people affected by the legacy of almost 500 nuclear tests.

5. **Ms. Nguyen Thi Thanh Ha** (Viet Nam) said that her delegation supported the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

6. It was no accident that poverty was considered the first critical area of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action. To alleviate poverty and improve the quality of life for women, charity work was not enough. Women needed to be actively involved in income-generating activities, and have equal access to economic resources and means of production. Employment contributed to poverty reduction and promoted gender equality, and it was the business of Governments to work out effective strategies for expanding employment opportunities.

7. In Viet Nam, the majority of women worked in agricultural or informal sectors, where it was hard to earn a decent and steady income. Measures to improve women's access to resources such as credit, technology and marketing techniques were urgently needed. In 1998, her Government had developed a revolving fund of 450 billion dongs to provide loans for 11,000 small projects, which had created employment for 250,000 urban workers, 60 per cent of whom were women. The State Bank of Viet Nam was developing a plan to provide women with access to credit programmes and funds. The Viet Nam women's union, a non-governmental organization, was promoting a nationwide campaign of mutual assistance among women, in establishing savings funds to provide loans for women entrepreneurs.

8. Investing in the education of women and girls was an important component of the poverty alleviation programme. Advances in women's education led to increases in women's participation in the formal labour force, enhanced productivity and development, and strengthened the incentives for households to invest in girls' education. Her Government attached importance to the eradication of illiteracy, improvement of education and vocational training, and increasing enrolment of women at all levels of education, with special attention to girls from poor families.

9. As part of the poverty alleviation programme, there was a wide network of communal health care in Viet Nam, and various United Nations agencies were cooperating in providing health care and family planning services to people in remote areas and poor rural communities.

10. **Ms. Zewdie** (Ethiopia) said that her delegation also associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

11. Her Government had incorporated the basic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action into the national women's policy and had established the necessary institutional framework for mainstreaming a gender perspective in economic and social activities. The women's affairs bureau in the office of the Prime Minister was responsible for coordinating the activities of women's affairs units of the Government.

12. Although the number of women parliamentarians had increased, the number of women in the political field was still small. The women's affairs bureau had set the goal of 15 per cent participation at the federal level and 20 per cent at the district level in the elections in May 2000. In the economic sphere, women were benefiting from land redistribution programmes, agricultural extension services and microcredit facilities. In some regions, women were being supported by a food production programme financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). A national strategy had been formulated to create an enabling legal and institutional environment for the growth of microenterprises, most of which were run by urban women.

13. A gender planning guideline had been developed, to be used as a tool for mainstreaming gender in the process of project planning, implementation and evaluation. The health policy had given special attention to the health needs of the family, particularly women and children. Primary health services were being expanded, particularly in rural areas, and goals had been set to increase the availability of contraceptives and reduce the maternal mortality rate.

14. Government institutions, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other international organizations as well as non-governmental organizations, were conducting intensive awareness campaigns about the harmful effects on women's health of traditional and customary practices, including early marriage and female genital mutilation. Those campaigns were gradually yielding the desired results.

15. The participation of women decreased as the level of education increased. To alleviate the problem school curricula for primary schools and the teacher training curriculum had been revised to make them gender sensitive. The Ministry of Education planned to increase the number of female teachers by 35 per cent in 2001 and the enrolment rate of girls to 45 per cent in the same year.

16. To ensure the full enjoyment of civil and political rights by women measures were being taken to draft new laws and regulations and to revise the family code, the labour law and the pension law. Her Government was also taking steps to combat violence against women in cooperation with non-governmental organizations. A national committee on rape and abduction had been formed to formulate a strategy.

17. A working committee had been established to assess the problem of the trafficking of women for export to foreign countries and recommend solutions. It would consult with the countries concerned on how to protect the rights of women who worked abroad and prevent them from becoming victims of violence.

18. There had been tangible improvements in the participation of women in political, economic and social activities, but changes remained marginal primarily owing to lack of capacity. Ethiopia hoped that, with the support and assistance of the international community, it would be able to achieve its goals.

19. **Ms. Durrant** (Jamaica) said that her delegation associated itself with the statements made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by Saint Lucia on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

20. Her delegation was concerned about the extent to which international and national efforts to advance the objectives of the Platform for Action continued to be threatened by several factors, including armed conflict, globalization and liberalization. Her delegation welcomed the reference in the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/123) to the need for further research to quantify and explain the impact of poverty on women, especially in rural areas. Another concern for her delegation was the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) pandemic and the need to prepare societies, including children, for the challenge they would have to confront.

21. Her Government welcomed efforts to revitalize the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) which needed the support of all Member States. The research conducted by the Institute during the 1998-1999 biennium testified to the significance of its role. National institutions involved in research on women's issues must work closely with the Institute to disseminate the results of their research, so that all States could better assess the progress being made in the implementation of the Platform for Action. The work of INSTRAW must be closely coordinated with the United Nations University and other research and training institutes within and outside the United Nations system, with due regard for the Institute's role as the focal point for research on gender issues. Through continued collaboration with other organizations like the United Nations Development

Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the common objective of the advancement of women's rights and benefits might be achieved.

22. Her delegation welcomed the efforts by the Secretary-General to improve the status of women in the Secretariat, but feared that the target of 50/50 gender distribution within the Secretariat was not likely to be reached before 2012. It urged Member States to present qualified women candidates for positions in the Organization.

23. Jamaica, like all the countries in the Caribbean, had made great strides in the advancement of women over recent decades in business and the professions. In the area of education, however, gender stereotyping resulted in women being largely trained for traditional lower-paying female jobs.

24. The bureau of women's affairs — the lead agency responsible for follow-up action to the Beijing Platform for Action — had taken various initiatives in a number of areas, including violence against women, women's health, institutional strengthening, education, and employment. A computer link had been established with women's bureaux in other CARICOM countries to strengthen regional collaboration.

25. **Mr. Yusoff** (Malaysia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

26. Women in Malaysia benefited from government development policies that did not discriminate on grounds of gender. The 1989 national policy on women formed the basis for efforts to fully integrate women in the development process. His Government was giving priority to increasing the participation of women in power-sharing and decision-making, promoting their economic potential, enhancing their legal position and eliminating violence against them.

27. Malaysia attached great importance to the participation of women in the labour market, in their access to educational and training opportunities, in women's health matters and in the review of laws and regulations that discriminated against women. The department of women's affairs ensured that women's interests and concerns were taken into account and that development programmes did not have a negative impact on women. Seminars, workshops, and meetings were often organized by the department, as well as gender sensitization training for government officials and planners.

28. His Government contributed funds and technical assistance to non-governmental organizations that played an active and effective role in advocating equality of status for women and equal opportunities for the participation of women in development. The national council of women's organizations of Malaysia played a key role in achieving that objective.

29. Women in Malaysia were protected by legislation on domestic violence, inheritance, guardianship and consumer protection. His delegation agreed that one of the major impediments to the achievement of gender equality was stereotypical attitudes towards the gender roles of women and men; laws and regulations would not achieve their objectives if women were socially discouraged in their efforts to advance their rights.

30. **Mr. Ortega Urbina** (Nicaragua) said that notwithstanding constitutional guarantees of equal treatment for women, instances of physical, psychological and sexual violence against women and girls frequently occurred in his country. To combat that phenomenon, the Government had set up special police stations for women and children with a view to preventing, punishing and eliminating such violence and provided professional psychological, medical and legal care for the victims. In addition, a standing committee had been set up within the National Assembly on women, children, youth and the family, with the mandate of amending and/or adopting relevant legislation.

31. Two contrasting female stereotypes had traditionally existed in Nicaraguan society: woman as mother, and woman as sex object. The educational system, especially in rural areas, tended to perpetuate those stereotypes, and thus helped to perpetuate the subordination of women. In practice, work done by women continued to be undervalued; women earned less than men for the same job and were generally barred from decision-making positions.

32. The subject of women had been accorded greater attention in recent years, however, as the women's movement had gathered force, and Government officials were becoming aware of the issues. Efforts were now being made through educational campaigns and gender-awareness workshops to eliminate discriminatory social stereotypes. In pursuance of present policy, reflecting the consensus of government and non-governmental organizations, sex education and gender equality must be taught in the country's schools and institutions, the object being to inculcate responsible attitudes towards sex to avoid sexually transmitted diseases and to promote family and religious values. In the economic sphere, the Government had established alternative programmes and policies to assist women in funding and managing small businesses and a Women's Institute whose mission was to create economic opportunities for women.

33. Having ratified numerous international legal instruments relating to the rights of women, including the Convention, the current Government had created the Ministry of the Family to monitor, promote and defend the institution of the family through social anti-discrimination programmes, with emphasis on ensuring the participation of women in the development process.

34. **Ms. Barghouti** (Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine) said that the twentieth anniversary of the Convention and the adoption of the Optional Protocol should inspire the international community to take practical action towards the advancement and empowerment of women. Her delegation wished to stress that all twelve critical areas of concern set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action must receive equal attention, among them "the effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation".

35. In addition to discrimination, violence and poverty, Palestinian women faced the harsh oppressive reality of the Israeli occupation on a daily basis: the construction and expansion of illegal Israeli colonial settlements, the confiscation of land and water, and the recurrent closing of the borders of the occupied Palestinian Territory, which included Jerusalem. The political situation uniquely determined the status of women in that territory, and affected the level of their advancement. It should also be noted that more than half the Palestinian population was made up of refugees, displaced persons and disintegrated families.

36. The Platform for Action and the results of the Arab Ministerial Conference held in Amman in 1996 had together formed the basis for a national strategy aimed at satisfying the particular needs, priorities, and resource constraints of Palestinian women. That strategy was founded on the principles of the Palestinian national programme, which called for the attainment of the inalienable rights of Palestinians, including the right to self-determination, the right to return to their homeland, and the establishment of an independent State. The peace process — which hinged on the Israeli Government's willingness to respect and implement agreements concluded on the basis of international law — had a profound effect on the lives of Palestinian women. Palestine hoped that the signing of the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum would propel the peace process forward and strengthen the ability of Palestinian women to participate in decision-making and development.

37. **Mr. Al-Malki** (Qatar) said that women elected to parliament would have exactly the same political rights as men. They already enjoyed free education, free health care and free housing while government assistance was given to those in need. Non-governmental organizations also provided significant social and material support to the family. His Government was particularly proud of the role played by the Family Development Institute, which provided training for women and enabled needy families to become economically self-reliant. His country hoped that the goals and aspirations of the special session to be held in June 2000 would be realized, while at the same time the cultural and traditional differences between peoples were respected. While beliefs and traditions should not be imposed on others, the international community must remain multicultural.

38. **Ms. Elisha** (Benin) said that the regional conference held in Benin in July 1999 on the preparation of reports by States parties to the Convention had helped to raise awareness in Benin and the surrounding region regarding the importance that the United Nations ascribed to the advancement and promotion of women. On the basis of the principle that to promote women meant to promote the family, Benin had ratified all international instruments regarding women, and participated in international women's forums. In its view, the true challenge lay in translating political will into action.

39. In Benin, rural women were constantly subject to the vicissitudes of poverty, a situation exacerbated by illiteracy and ignorance. They lived without electricity and drinking water and cooked over wood fires, which harmed both their health and the environment. In addition, they suffered the adverse effects of polygamy.

40. The Secretary-General's report (A/54/123-E/1999/66) noted that rural electrification programmes in Benin had failed because they required capital-intensive technology. That argument was difficult to accept in view of the ability of the international community to respond rapidly and efficiently to other kinds of emergency situations, and demonstrated a lack of political will and interest on its part. The price of electrification projects should not hamper the production of energy in rural areas, since cheaper alternatives, such as solar energy, were available. Benin exhorted the international community to mobilize its resources to curb the dire poverty in rural areas.

41. In Benin, mothers were driven by abject poverty to place their children with other guardians for the child's survival, or for remuneration. The children were subject to every kind of violence, abuse, and trafficking, both domestic and international, and many became pregnant at any early age. Although a draft law on the placement of children within the national territory was to be adopted soon and should eliminate the abuse of such children, it would be

difficult to dissuade parents from the practice of selling children if dire poverty persisted.

42. The legal status of women in Benin remained precarious despite the ratification of a number of international instruments because the clash between contemporary law and customary law hindered the advancement of women. In addition, Beninese legislation prohibited abortion and the dissemination of birth control information. With a view to remedying those problems, the Beninese Government had formulated draft laws on rape, genital mutilation and the voluntary interruption of pregnancy, and had tabled a draft code on individuals and the family in the National Assembly. It was also conducting awareness campaigns about genital mutilation. By waiving school fees for girls in rural areas the Government had succeeded in raising the enrolment rates for both girls and boys between 1994 and 1998. It expected to achieve a 60 per cent enrolment rate for girls by the year 2000, and a 50 per cent literacy rate for women by the year 2015.

43. Benin had five female members of Parliament, two female party leaders, two women members of the constitutional court, and one female mayor. In addition, 26.8 per cent of the public service corps was made up of women, and 14.1 per cent of managerial positions were occupied by women. The high rate of illiteracy, the burden of household duties, the weight of social tradition, and the reluctance to take leadership roles all constituted obstacles to the advancement of women. In order to emancipate Beninese women of the future, major impetus must be given to girls' and women's education.

44. **Mr. Khaleel** (Maldives) said that the Maldives recognized the pivotal role played by women in the development process and was steadfastly working to bridge the gender gap by empowering women. The new Constitution of that country provided a comprehensive legal framework for the advancement of women's rights, and prepared the ground for the Maldives to consider amending its reservation to the Convention.

45. The Maldives was working closely with its neighbours to redress economic and social inequities in South Asia within the framework of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC); it had helped to plan the SAARC Decade for the Girl Child, and was promoting a regional convention to combat the crime of trafficking in women and children for purposes of prostitution, which was likely to be adopted at the Eleventh SAARC Summit, to be held at Kathmandu in December 1999. SAARC also planned to draft a charter for regional social development, the first experts' drafting session to be held in Colombo. Maldives had developed a national plan called "Vision 2020", which set forth its major goals and objectives for the first 20 years of the new millennium.

46. **Mr. Al-Shamsi** (United Arab Emirates) said that his delegation supported the statement on agenda item 109 made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

47. National, regional and international efforts to find solutions to economic and social problems and to resolve conflicts must be increased if women were to be effectively involved in sustainable national development. At the same time, the special characteristics of each society, its cultural heritage and social and religious beliefs must be respected. His country supported the proposals to increase the involvement of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in field studies and the implementation of projects to foster development in poor countries and alleviate the effects of civil and regional laws and occupation.

48. He wished to express the gravest concern over what Palestinian and Arab women and their families were subjected to daily inside the occupied territories. The occupying Israeli forces carried out acts of violence and oppression, demolished houses, imposed curfews, expropriated land and made arbitrary arrests in violation of international law and the fourth Geneva Convention. The international community must demand that the Israeli Government comply with the provisions of international conventions and halt such aggressive practices.

49. His country attached the greatest importance to strengthening the role of its women and their involvement in all aspects of national development. A number of women's centres and groups had been established in the UAE and legislation had been enacted which guaranteed women their constitutional rights. His country's commitment had been demonstrated by the formation of national committees for follow-up to the Beijing Conference and the establishment of numerous literacy centres, nurseries, women's health centres, and women's training centres. He hoped that the special session of the General Assembly to be held in the year 2000 would help to achieve goals and aspirations relating to the advancement of women.

50. **Ms. Aghadjanian** (Armenia) said that Armenian legislation had long provided for equal rights of women and did not require revision. The main challenge was to overcome stereotypes. The national plan of action for improving the situation of women in Armenia recommended, *inter alia*, that progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action be assessed on an annual basis. Further objectives were to enhance women's participation in decision-making; to assist victims of violence; to develop

social networks for adolescent girls; to combat unemployment among women; and to improve working conditions for women.

51. Despite concerted efforts on the part of the Government, Armenian women did not occupy senior posts in decision-making and remained under-represented in politics, law enforcement and foreign policy. They tended to be employed in traditionally "female" professions, such as education, medicine and culture.

52. Although the promotion of women's rights was one of the main achievements of the United Nations, much remained to be done to improve the status of women within the Secretariat. Strategies to support gender equality should be translated into affirmative action, with due attention accorded to the representation of women from countries in transition and from developing countries. Also at the international level, the adoption by consensus of the Optional Protocol (to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) would no doubt provide new impetus to the promotion of women's rights.

53. **Ms. Bouah-Kamon** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that her delegation wished to align itself with the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

54. The situation of rural women in the Côte d'Ivoire was a particular cause for concern, with female illiteracy approaching 80 per cent in rural areas, almost twice the corresponding urban rate. Moreover, rural women failed to enjoy the same standard of health services or living conditions. Despite their crucial contribution to the national economy and their overwhelming presence in agriculture, their income was only 22 per cent that of men. Her delegation accordingly supported the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/54/123-E/1999/66), particularly with regard to their participation in decision-making.

55. Her Government had adopted measures to raise public awareness of the Beijing Platform for Action and to encourage women in various sectors to voice their concerns and formulate recommendations. Not only had the budget of the Ministry dealing with the family and the advancement of women been increased by more than 70 per cent over the past four years, but additional institutional and legislative machinery had also been established to combat violence against women, including harmful traditional practices.

56. At subregional level, an Association of Women of West Africa (currently chaired by Côte d'Ivoire) which had been established by countries of the Economic Community of West African States planned to initiate cultural, social, economic and political programmes for advancing the status of women. Its effectiveness would depend on the availability of resources.

57. At the international level, it was essential that the foreign debt problem be resolved. Had her Government not been forced to allocate 52 per cent of its budget to debt servicing, it would have been able to devote more resources to the advancement of women, an issue which ought to be a priority for all Governments.

58. **Mrs. Farhâdi** (Afghanistan) stressed the continued pertinence of the report of the Assistant Secretary-General on the Advancement of Women on her visit to Afghanistan two years previously. The extreme seriousness of the situation of Afghan women had aroused international concern, as testified most recently by a resolution of the Economic and Social Council (E/CN/1999/L.7) condemning, *inter alia*, the systematic violation by the Taliban of women's rights to health, education and employment, freedom of movement and protection from harassment and violence. For the past four years, the Taliban mercenaries had persistently prevented women from participating in political, economic, social and cultural life despite promises made verbally to United Nations officials, non-governmental organizations and journalists. Restrictions confining women to their homes had been tightened. In Kâboul, widows with children to feed were denied both welfare and the right to work. Women in the more recently occupied territories had now met the fate of those in Kandahâr, Hérât and Kâboul. In Mazâr-él-Sharif — occupied since August 1998 — the last University to accept girls had been closed, as had all girls' schools in the occupied north and in Bâmyân.

59. Only two months previously, the Talibans had attacked the northern provinces of Parwân and Kâpisâ and, according to United Nations sources, had forcibly displaced some 40,000 villagers to Kâboul. The men had been imprisoned, while the women had been crowded into dilapidated buildings. A further 75,000 had fled to the Taliban-occupied north where they continued to lack adequate accommodation, food and medicines. Her delegation urged the international community to come to their assistance before the winter snows exacerbated the situation.

60. **Mr. Al-Saidi** (Kuwait) said that his Government considered that women and men had an equal contribution to make to the building of society and its economic and social development. It therefore provided women with free education at all stages, and women now represented more than 50 per cent of all those attending educational

institutions. Women's access to health care was reflected in the lowered mortality rates, and women's non-governmental organizations were fully supported by the Kuwaiti Government. In May 1999, women had been accorded full political rights, currently represented 33.5 per cent of the workforce, and were employed in all sectors.

61. On the other hand, Kuwaiti women were still suffering social and psychological problems as a result of their experiences during the Iraqi occupation. Many had lost a male relative or had family members who were still being held in Iraqi prisons. Their anguish was only increased by Iraq's prolonged failure to release the Kuwaiti prisoners or to disclose information about them. The Iraqi Government had recently discontinued its participation in the Tripartite Commission on Missing Persons and Kuwait wished to note that of the 605 prisoners held in Iraq, 7 were Kuwaiti women, and neither the Kuwaiti Government nor the women's families had access to any information about them.

62. **Mrs. Amazan Cantave** (Haiti) expressed full endorsement of the statements made by Guyana and Saint Lucia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of the Caribbean Community respectively.

63. In her country women and men continued to live in different worlds in terms of access to education and employment, health, security and leisure. Haitian women, for example, were responsible for 90 per cent of market produce and 70 per cent were heads of households; yet not only were they less well remunerated than men, they were also discriminated against with respect to inheritance. Maternal mortality rates were high, with 1,000 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. In education, high drop-out rates — linked, *inter alia*, to early pregnancies — were a cause for concern, as were gender stereotypes persisting in textbooks.

64. Although the country could boast a female president and prime minister, women's participation in government remained minimal. Although no national statistics existed, violence against women was another matter of concern. At the legislative level, women's civil status continued to be restricted; despite the ratification of international instruments, the offending provisions in the laws had not been amended. Moreover, the predominance of male judges at all levels of the judiciary perpetuated discriminatory systems and practices. In certain areas, penalties for men and women were different. With respect to adultery, for example, although a woman could divorce on the grounds of a husband's adultery, the husband was only considered to have committed adultery if he actually brought the mistress into the conjugal home.

65. To date, her Government had sought to implement its Beijing commitments by elaborating a national plan of action; conducting awareness-raising campaigns on the six themes identified as national priorities in the Platform for Action and on women in decision-making; establishing a national committee on girls' education which was responsible for countering stereotypes in the school system; and providing primary education scholarships for girls with single mothers. A range of legislative measures were also envisaged.

66. Laws might be enacted to protect women's rights, but laws could not easily change attitudes and behaviour. Her delegation agreed with the Interparliamentary Union that real democracy depended on national policies and legislation elaborated by men and women together, giving equitable attention to the specific needs of both halves of the population.

67. **Mr. Bakoniarivo** (Madagascar), expressing support, *inter alia*, for the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that her Government welcomed the adoption of the Optional Protocol and would strive not only to press for its earliest ratification, but also to translate international commitments into action.

68. Madagascar's population (of 14 million) was for the most part rural; the majority lived well below the poverty line, women and girls being the worst affected. Despite efforts to revise legislation on land rights and on access to vocational training and education, to implement income-generating projects and community credit schemes and to build hospitals, the population continued to lack access to basic services, including health, water and education. Insufficient access to land, tools and credit had resulted in a chronic food shortage which had been further exacerbated by natural catastrophes.

69. The national plan of action for implementing Cairo and Beijing goals had as yet achieved only modest results. With the support of the United Nations system, however, a number of activities for improving the living conditions of women and girls were in progress. They included mechanisms for consulting target groups, support for women's organizations, capacity-building to integrate women in development and to promote gender equality. At the institutional level, organizations had been established to coordinate non-governmental efforts, to ensure cooperation between ministries on social and legal issues affecting women and to monitor the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

70. Considerable progress had been achieved in girls' education. Textbooks and curricula had been revised to

eliminate gender discrimination; teachers had been made more aware of the specific needs of female pupils and a programme to promote the employment and re-employment of women had been elaborated. Moreover, illiteracy among women had been reduced by 15 per cent and distances pupils must travel to school had been shortened. With a view to enhancing the future participation of the girl child in decision-making, efforts had been made to inform policy makers and the public of her rights. National health policy prioritized the mother and child and reproductive health, including family planning, adolescent health, malnutrition and HIV/AIDS.

71. Given the importance of the work of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) to developing countries, her delegation hoped that an urgent solution to its financial straits would be found. The international community must also provide support to enable countries to overcome factors impeding full implementation of Beijing goals; accordingly, the preparatory committee for the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly should address the related issues of resource mobilization, support for structural adjustment, improved market access for developing countries, exchange of technologies and know-how (the provision of grants for training), and development cooperation.

72. **Mr. Eboutou** (Cameroon) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

73. His delegation welcomed the adoption of the Optional Protocol, and the work of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in 1999. It expressed appreciation for the work of UNIFEM, but hoped that UNIFEM would intensify its activities in Central Africa, Cameroon would be happy to receive a regional adviser from UNIFEM.

74. While his delegation fully supported the recommendations of the Commission on the Status of Women for accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, it was difficult to implement strategies to assist the victims of discrimination and at the same time pursue integration efforts which assumed progressive change in the longer term, taking into account the process of economic globalization and structural adjustment policies.

75. Cameroon had established national mechanisms and carried out multisectoral programmes to promote the participation of women in development and to cope with the problems of rural women. It had achieved food self-sufficiency, largely as a result of the efforts of rural women. They were being enrolled in programmes in the areas of education, health and vocational training.

76. **Mrs. Haile** (Eritrea) welcomed the adoption of the Optional Protocol and outlined government measures aimed at improving the status of Eritrean women. Legislative changes included the adoption of a macro-policy which addressed the root causes of inequality and poverty and prescribed changes in the social power structure. In the Civil Code, discriminatory clauses on marriage and the family had been revised. The right of women to own land was also guaranteed. Not only was the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (to which Eritrea was a party) incorporated into domestic law, it had also been fully reflected in the documents of the liberation struggle. Increasing numbers of Eritrean women were now using the legal system to defend their rights, but many remained unaware of the remedies available to them. The Government — in cooperation with the National Union of Eritrean Women — had therefore introduced awareness-raising mechanisms, *inter alia* through resource allocation and the promotion of greater collaboration between government and civil society.

77. **Mr. García González** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Central American Group, said that the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was an event which strengthened existing international and hemispheric instruments for protecting the human rights of women and contributed to the efforts of the Central American countries to promote a culture of peace and equality for women. All States parties to the Convention should therefore sign, ratify or accede to the Optional Protocol.

78. The Central American countries remained committed to the principles and purposes of the Central American Alliance for Sustainable Development, including the principle that development must be people-centred and must take place within a framework of equity, solidarity, equality of opportunities, full participation in society and access by the entire population to essential social services.

79. In keeping with that commitment, the countries of the Central American Group had established the legal and institutional framework for social development based on the principles of mutual cooperation, solidarity and realization of the full potential of men and women in the region as well as on overcoming the structural factors that gave rise to poverty in the subregion. Those subregional mechanisms complemented national efforts to ensure effective follow-up to the commitments undertaken in the Beijing Declaration

and Platform for Action to improve the situation of women in the region.

80. The region's human development index revealed the marked inequalities from which women suffered in the fields of education, health, income and participation in the labour market. The situation of women had deteriorated further in the aftermath of the recent hurricanes, which had negatively affected the region's economic growth and thus its capacity to invest in basic social services.

81. The grave challenges ahead meant that the region's Governments, with the assistance of the international community, must redouble their efforts to overcome their vulnerabilities. Central America attached great importance to the development of regional mechanisms to help fulfil the commitments made at the Beijing Conference. Those mechanisms included the Central American preparatory meeting for the VIII Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which had been held earlier that week in San Salvador to draw up Latin American and Caribbean proposals for presentation to the special session of the General Assembly in 2000 entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

82. **Mr. Naber** (Jordan) said that the Jordanian Council of Ministers had assigned to the Jordanian National Committee for Women the task of drawing up and prioritizing the national women's policy. That committee, which represented a true partnership among Government, non-governmental organizations and civil society, had mainstreamed a gender perspective into the programmes and policies of all 19 government sections, and had thereby integrated women into the Social and Economic Development Plan 1999-2003. It had developed an action plan for each policy area, including *inter alia*, health, education, vocational training, and decision-making.

83. In the view of Jordan, providing education for women was the crucial factor in improving health, nutrition, and family education, and in empowering women to participate in decision-making. Jordan's commitment to education for women was therefore unwavering, despite its economic burdens. Access to schools was now almost universal, with enrolment rates slightly higher for girls than for boys, and female illiteracy had plunged from nearly 50 per cent in 1979 to 18 per cent in 1997. At the university level, there were 94 female students to 100 male students. Improvements had also been noted in the health sector, including better maternal health, a lower infant mortality rate and greater access to health centres and family planning services.

84. His Government believed that the international community must work together to stimulate awareness of the obstacles to education; Governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, members of the civil society, businesses and financial institutions should seek to achieve a consensus with a view to designing a holistic approach to development.

85. In accordance with its obligations under CEDAW, Jordan was reviewing and revising existing legislation, with attention to discriminatory provisions contained in the Constitution. The Labour Law, the Civil Service Law and the passport and civil status regulations had been amended. A draft law dealing with "honour crimes" had recently been submitted to Parliament. In that regard, the Government condemned all forms of violence against women, including that perpetrated against them during armed conflicts, and urged the international community to uphold and bolster international human rights legislation as well as humanitarian relief for victims of mass violence. In that connection, it should be noted that Jordan had been the first Middle Eastern country to sign the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

86. The barriers that continued to impede the empowerment and full participation of Jordanian women were more attitudinal than legislative. Workshops, seminars and training programmes in women's political and legal rights had therefore been provided to government officials and to women from all strata of society. It was clear that assistance from abroad and political will would not suffice: in order to achieve the advancement of women in the complex modern world, a genuinely collective effort was required.

87. **Ms. Bihotori** (Burundi) said that the national plan of action had identified three objectives: (1) to re-instil in women values that were conducive to the emergence of a culture of peace; (2) to increase the participation of women in the peace process currently under way in Burundi; and (3) to restore the moral and human dignity of women victims of civil strife. To that end, a cultural festival on the theme of "A culture of peace" had been organized in January 1998 and women had been accepted as members of the National *Bashingantahe* Council in order to promote national unity and reconciliation.

88. In the field of health, the objectives were to reduce the rates of malnutrition and anaemia; to increase from 19 per cent to 24 per cent the proportion of women who had three prenatal consultations during their pregnancy; to increase the percentage of women who benefited from qualified assistance during childbirth from 12 per cent to 17 per cent

by the year 2000; to increase the rate of contraceptive use from 3.5 per cent to 7 per cent by the year 2000; to reduce the rate of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases among women by 5 per cent by the year 2000; and to provide assistance to adolescents and women who were victims of violence.

89. Despite the economic crisis which confronted Burundi, the Government had been seeking to improve the economic situation of women by promoting income-generating activities, organizing women into associations and granting small loans to the latter. The percentage of girls attending secondary school had also increased following the establishment of community colleges.

90. Although the right to education, work and remuneration and the right to vote were guaranteed to both men and women on an equal footing, the situation of women in Burundi still gave cause for concern. It was therefore proposed to continue efforts to improve their legal status and to mobilize resources to fund programmes specifically for their benefit. In that regard, her delegation appealed to the international community to resume its bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

91. **Ms. David** (Philippines) said that the Philippines sought through national development plans to attain the vision of a gender-responsive society. The Government's Social Reform Council, for example, which was the highest policy-making body implementing the national anti-poverty programme, specifically targeted women. As part of the national plan of action, some 70 government agencies had developed gender and development plans covering such activities as gender sensitivity training, the mainstreaming of gender concerns into poverty-alleviation legislation, legislation against trafficking in women, and the empowerment of women.

92. In the area of education, women enjoyed near equal status with men, thanks to such government efforts as the introduction of a non-formal education system and literacy programmes for indigenous women and girls. At both the bilateral and regional levels, the Philippines took the lead in addressing the concerns of women.

93. She welcomed the decision of the Economic and Social Council to dedicate at least one of its high-level segments before the year 2000 to the advancement of women and that of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to focus on the issue of trafficking in women. The Philippines was particularly interested in the indicators concerning women which were being developed by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and in the comparative analysis by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) of case studies on violence against women and trafficking in women. More effective coordination of United Nations activities pertaining to women would help to identify trends and provide a basis for recommendations for future action.

94. The Philippines was particularly concerned by the issue of violence against women, especially migrant women workers. The majority of the one billion people living in abject poverty were women, who tended to migrate in search of a better life. Every effort should therefore be made to ensure that such workers were provided with adequate protection and not subjected to abuse, exploitation and violation of their rights. That goal could be achieved, however, only through international cooperation and universal implementation of the international instruments that promoted and protected the rights of migrant workers. It was regrettable that, to date, only 12 countries had signed the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Member States which had not yet done so should sign, ratify or accede to the Convention so that it could enter into force before the new millennium.

95. She noted with satisfaction the increased national efforts to eliminate traditional practices that were harmful to women. Education and advocacy were important tools for bringing about attitudinal changes in that area. Her delegation also welcomed the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which augured well for the goal of advancing women's rights in the new millennium.

96. **Ms. Gonzalez** (Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) expressed satisfaction at the references which members of the Committee had made to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was one of several international Conventions whose aim was the protection of women's rights. The experts on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women would take account of the recommendations and suggestions that had been made as they continued to work towards the effective implementation of the Convention and the eradication of all forms of discrimination based on sex.

Agenda item 106: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/C.3/54/L.2)

97. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to take action on the draft resolution entitled "Policies and programmes involving youth", contained in document A/C.3/54/L.2, which had been recommended by the Economic and Social Council for adoption. The draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

98. **Ms. Newell** (Secretary of the Committee) recalled that the representative of Portugal had orally amended the draft resolution by inserting a new paragraph after paragraph 15, the text of which read as follows:

> "*Reiterates* the call made in the Programme of Action to Member States to consider including youth representatives in their delegations to the General Assembly and other relevant United Nations meetings, thus broadening the channels of communication and enhancing the discussion of youth-related issues and requests the Secretary-General to convey again this invitation to Member States."

99. **Mr. Ndiaye** (Senegal) said, with reference to the hosting in Senegal of the fourth session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system, that his Government had been approached by a number of youth organizations requesting that the convening of the fourth session be deferred until the year 2001 in order to allow more time for the implementation of the outcome of the third session and for mobilization and preparations for the fourth session. His Government had acceded to those requests and therefore wished to propose that the year 2000 in draft paragraph 10 should be replaced by 2001.

100. **Mr. Mofokeng** (South Africa), joined by **Ms. Paiva** (Portugal) and **Mr. Bhattacharjee** (India), supported the amendment just proposed by the representative of Senegal and hoped that the preparatory process would benefit from the additional time and that every effort would be made to strengthen the participation of representatives from the developing countries.

101. *Draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.2, as orally amended, was adopted without a vote.*

102. **Ms. Wagner** (United States of America) said that her delegation had joined in the consensus on the draft resolution just adopted on the understanding that the funding for the proposed second World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth should be from outside the Organization's regular budget and that the actual decision to hold such a Conference would be taken at a later date.

103. **Mr. Bilman** (Turkey), supported by **Mr. Mofokeng** (South Africa), recalled that his Government had offered to host the second World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth. He therefore deeply regretted the statement just made by the representative of the United States of America.

The meeting rose at 6.40 p.m.